

APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

2014 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: Teach For America

Application ID:14ES157607

Program Name: Teach For America-Nashville

For the purpose of enhancing our programs by improving the quality and quantity of applications to the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), we are providing specific feedback regarding the strengths and weaknesses of this application. These comments are not meant to represent a comprehensive assessment; rather the analysis represents those elements that had the greatest bearing on the rating of the application. Please note that this feedback consists of summary comments from more than one reviewer. For this reason, some of the comments may seem to be inconsistent or contradictory. Comments are not representative of all of the information used in the final funding decision.

Reviewers' Summary Comments:

Strengths:

The applicant sufficiently provided data on the shortage of highly qualified teachers by citing local data from the University of Tennessee.

An inadequate number of highly qualified, talented, and diverse teachers drive this deficit of excellent educational opportunities for students in Metro Nashville.

The applicant identifies a shortage of teachers in the target area.

There was a shortage of qualified teachers for the number of disadvantaged children in the area.

The applicant states that thirty -one percent of economically disadvantaged children have the literacy skills appropriate for their grade level.

The applicant provides current data to demonstrate that a shortage of highly qualified teachers leads to high dropout rates and academic failure.

The applicant provides some federal and state data to demonstrate the association between a shortage of highly qualified teachers and academic success.

The applicant presents a clear explanation of the research as it demonstrates the importance of highly qualified teachers being instrumental in student improvement in core subjects.

The applicant presented strong research that demonstrated the impact of Teach For America AmeriCorps members on student achievement, including several statewide studies ranking teacher preparation programs.

The applicant provided adequate data on the percentage of Teach for America members remaining in education.

The applicant describes how the proposed training will encourage their students to consider teaching as a longer-term career path.

The applicant provides information to support the expected short and long-term outcomes. For example, the applicant anticipates that 85% of the Members will gain deeper conviction and 70% of the members will remain in education. The application describes that historically, 8% of TFA-Nashville (Teach for America-Nashville) members considered a career in education prior to joining AmeriCorps, while over 60% teach at least one additional year after their commitment. Such a change before and after training is a significant positive impact.

The applicant provided random-assignment studies, quasi-experimental studies, along with correlational studies on the effectiveness of Teach For America.

The applicant provided evidence to support past performances of teachers who are highly qualified that taught core subjects to economically disadvantaged students.

The applicant demonstrates that they have effectively met their goals and accomplished success. For example, the applicant describes that TFA-Nashville is ranked consistently among the most effective teacher preparation programs and TFA-Nashville is the number one producer of effective new teachers yearly, and one of only six programs to have consistently produced teachers that are outperforming other teachers in the state.

Weaknesses:

The applicant defines the problem as students not performing at grade level and graduating unprepared for college; however, no data is provided to demonstrate the link between the stated problem and shortage of highly qualified teachers.

The applicant provides percentages of the children suffering because of the lack of qualified teachers in the metro Nashville area but there is no reference for how the number was derived.

The applicant does not make a convincing argument regarding inequities to educational opportunities in academic success. The applicant does not provide sufficient data to support the claim that students in the target area are performing lower than average.

The applicant does not provide adequate data to support the connection between lower education level and income.

The applicant does not provide sufficient local data to justify their selection of the target communities.

The applicant claims that three in every four Metropolitan Nashville Public School students are economically disadvantaged and only 31% have the literacy skills appropriate for their grade level; however, the applicant does not provide any evidence or data source to support the claim.

The applicant provided adequate data on the benefits of having AmeriCorps members; however, the applicant did not provide sufficient data showing students' baseline academic performance or college readiness.

There were no significant weaknesses in the Past Performance section.